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SUBJECT: Ghimpu Confirmed As Acting President,
Nominates Filat for Prime Minister

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On September 17, the Constitutional Court confirmed the legality of Parliamentary Speaker Ghimpu's assumption of the position of Acting President. Ghimpu promptly nominated Liberal Democratic Party leader Vlad Filat as his candidate for Prime Minister. Filat will have up to 15 days to propose his program and cabinet to the Parliament, but is expected to do so sooner. Ghimpu also announced that he was lifting the visa requirements for citizens of Romania.

¶2. (SBU) The Parliament adopted a law in its first reading making changes to the Government structure. They proposed sixteen ministries, and a reduction in the number of state agencies from thirteen to eight. Most controversial was elimination of the Ministry of Reintegration. Though the Transnistria issue will be handled by a National Office headed by a Deputy Prime Minister, ex-Minister Sova and others from Communist Party expressed concern that this was a sign the new government would not take reintegration seriously. Parliament also amended the law to remove a 2007 prohibition on government officials having dual citizenship. END SUMMARY.

Court Rules Ghimpu Legally Acting President

¶3. (SBU) In a September 17 sitting, the Constitutional Court confirmed the legality of Speaker Ghimpu assuming the position of Acting President on September 11. Although the Court did not mention Ghimpu by name, it Court ruled that former President Voronin's letter of resignation had created a vacancy that triggered the need for an Acting President.

Ghimpu Nominates Filat as Prime Minister Candidate

¶4. (SBU) After being assured that his role as Acting President was recognized as fully legal, as required by law Ghimpu consulted with the Parliamentary factions, and then announced that he had designated PLDM leader Vlad Filat as his candidate for Prime Minister. Under Article 98 of the Constitution, Filat will have a period of up to 15 days to present his program and cabinet to

the Parliament for approval. As the Alliance is eager to put its government into place as quickly as possible, it is expected that Filat will return to the Parliament to propose his cabinet in the coming days. Ghimpu announced that Moldova would have a functional government in place before the end of September.

Ghimpu Suspends Visa Regime for Romanians

¶ 15. (SBU) Ghimpu also signed a decree suspending the previous government's April 8 decision (adopted in the wake of the April 7 violence) introducing a visa regime for citizens of Romania. He announced that starting from September 18, citizens of Romania will be able to travel to Moldova without visas.

Parliament adopts Law on Restructuring Government

¶ 16. (SBU) The Parliament also adopted in the first reading a law on the structure of the government. Although the Alliance kept the number of ministries at 16 (as in the previous government, the law introduced two new ministries and removed two old ministries. The new ministries will be Ministry of Transportation and Road Infrastructure and Ministry of Youth, Sport and Tourism. The two ministries dissolved were the Ministry of Reintegration, and the Ministry of Local Public Administration. The number of State Agencies was reduced from thirteen to eight. An Agency of Public Property was created. In recognition of the importance of customs to the state budget, the Parliament bill would also make the Customs Service subordinate to the Ministry of Finance. Finally, the Moldova-Vin Agency will be under the Ministry of Economy. This restructuring will

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still have to be considered in the second reading before it enters into force.

Decision on Reintegration Ministry Triggers Backlash

¶ 17. (SBU) The elimination of the Ministry of Reintegration triggered harsh criticism from the PCRM. Ex-Minister Vasile Sova (who appeared visibly upset) and other PCRM deputies claimed removing that eliminating the Ministry would damage the country's ability to deal with this important issue and would send wrong signals to the public, both nationally and internationally.

¶ 18. (SBU) Alliance deputies argued that although they were eliminating the Ministry of Reintegration as a Ministry, they proposed to create a National Office within the Government to be headed by a Deputy Prime Minister. According to AIE, a Deputy Prime Minister would have greater authority to coordinate GoM efforts, including assigning tasks to other ministers, and hence the coverage of reintegration was being promoted to a higher level.

Public Officials Allowed to Hold Dual Citizenship

¶ 19. (SBU) The 53 Alliance MPs also voted to remove from the Law on Government the provision

preventing the public officials from having dual citizenship, a restriction introduced in 2007 by the PCRM and PPCD. The Communists also were strongly critical of this move, but Alliance deputies argued that given Moldova's ethnic structure and historic background, such restrictions were incorrect. Reportedly, 20 Alliance MPs hold Romanian passports.

Comment

¶10. (SBU) As expected, the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of Ghimpu as acting President. The position was indeed vacant, and the law does say that the Speaker should become Acting President. With the favorable decision in hand, Ghimpu did not lose any time before nominating Filat as candidate for Prime Minister. The Alliance will now move forward as quickly as possible to put a new government in place. Ghimpu's decision to repeal the visa regime also should pave the way for better relations with Romania and with the EU.

CHAUDHRY